

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
FLOOR STATEMENT ON SSJC APPROPRIATION BILL
June 27, 2006

Mr. Chairman:

I rise in strong support of this bill, and I want to thank my friend, Chairman Frank Wolf, for working so closely with me on the science portions of this bill.

The passage of this bill may be looked back on as a landmark moment in American history. That probably sounds like hyperbole, but I mean it. This bill put us on course to enact the President's American Competitiveness Initiative, which will double the combined budgets of three key science agencies, the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Department of Energy Office of Science, which already received appropriations in the Energy and Water bill.

These agencies, which are not exactly on the tip of everyone's tongue, are keystones of our nation's economic future. Our nation will remain strong and prosperous only if we remain innovative. And we will only remain innovative if we have the most robust research and education enterprise in the world. And it is these agencies that help enable the U.S. to lead the world in science, math and engineering education and in research.

And I want to especially thank Chairman Wolf for supporting education funding as well as research funding in this bill, particularly for supporting the Noyce Scholarship Program at NSF, which attracts top science and math majors into teaching.

I also want to thank Chairman Wolf for the way he handled appropriations for the NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration). I have said repeatedly, and the authorization Act we passed last year says clearly, that NASA must be a multi-mission agency. With this bill, the House will be putting money where its mouth is. Without interfering with the lunar mission, this bill puts desperately needed funding back in science and aeronautics.

I would like to see even more money going into science, particularly earth science, but this bill is a good start. And I'm especially pleased that the bill text includes explicit funding levels for science and aeronautics.

Finally, given competing priorities, I think the bill does the best it can for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), although, of course, I hope that, as in past years, the final numbers are higher. I appreciate the language Chairman Wolf included in the report, drawing attention to the concerns we all share about the future of the polar satellite program, NPOESS.

So I urge my colleagues to support this forward-looking, landmark bill. And again, I thank the Chairman for being such a bold and active partner on competitiveness issues.